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EAST TIMOR
ON THE
ROAD TO
INDEPENDENCE

A BACKGROUND REPORT

The danger of an Indonesian invasion -

FRETILIN: the mass independence movement -

the colonial legacy

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PREFACE:

The booklet that follows was written by a member of the Southern Africa Liberation Centre after a two week visit to East ("Portuguese") Timor in the last half of October 1974.

The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Campaign for Independent East Timor. Howeveer, it is the first lengthy report on evenss in East Timor since fascism was overthrown in Portugal on April 25, 1974. We believe it is the first such report published anywhere in the world.

This report has been widely circulated in Australia and overseas: it has been sent to over thirty organisations, particularly those concerned with Asian affairs, peace and anti-colonialism. It has been sent to all foreign Embassies in Australia. All Government Federal Parliamentarians and many Opposition MPs have received a copy, as have all members of the parliamentary press gallery.

Already, in a number of overseas countries, organisations have begun to protest Indonesian invasion plans and to support independence and self-determination.

In Australia, the Campaign for Independent East Timor was formed early in November to campaign for the right of East Timor to self-determination and independence; opposition to forced integration of East Timor in Indonesian and to support the co-operatives, anti-illiteracy program and village health program being organised by FRETILIN(Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor).

We believe that the danger of an Indonesian invasion is a real one. Since this booklet was written, further reports have appeared in the world press of Indonesian plans:(Sydney Morning Herald, Nov. 16, Fare Eastern Economic Review, Nov. 1 and Nov. 15, National Times, Nov.11-16, and in reports from East Timor itself), Indonesian generals throgh newspaper they control have spoken of a "Goa-style" invasion. The parallel with Goa is totally incorrect, however: India had the overwhelming support of the Goanese when it invaded; it moved against fascist Portugal which refused all self-determination, and it only moved after long talks.

Indonesia did nothing for East Timor when it was under fascism. Now it has the promise of self-determination, the Indonesian generals want to move against the timorese.

We believe it is urgent to mount large-scale protests against the invasion threat and for independence for East Timor. Australia crucial.

We ask you to join the CAMPAIGN FOR INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR, donate generously to our campaign and get your organisation to protest the affiliate with CIET. We are seriously in debt financially: we felt the need to move immediately and not wait until we had the finance. But we are confident we will get your support and aid. FRETILIN is also seriously short of finance, particularly for much needed visits to the United Nations, Africa and elsewhere.

We will pass on your donations to them.

Provisional Committe, CIET. Nov.28

EAST ("PORTUGUESE") TIMOR FACES INVASION THREAT FROM INDONESIA

-- a background report.

I. INTRODUCTION

400 miles north west of Darwin lies East ("Portuguese") Timor. After over 450 years of colonial rule the people of East Timor now are celebrating their first taste of political democracy, following the April 25 coup in Portugal this year.

The 650,000 people of East Timor decide independence. The two major parties in East Timor --FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor) and UDT (Timorese Democratic Union) -- both stand for independence and continuing close links with Portugal and strongly oppose integration in Indonesia.

Only the small APODETI party (Popular Democracy of Timor) supports integration in Indonesia.

At a recent rally on October 20, when 15,000 persons gathered in the capital Dili to hear Dr.Almeida Santos ,Portuguese Overseas Coordination Minister , speak on his government's attitude to East Timor's future, only 200 persons rallied behind the APODETI banner. The remainder were divided with the majority with FRETILIN and about 40 percent with UDT

Yet from many sources (including Sydney Morning Herald (October 30) and FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW (Nov. 1)) reports come that Indonesia is prepared to invade East Timor rather than allow an independent State to be established.

Australian Prime Minister Whitlam gave direct encouragement to Indonesian ambition and military adventures during a recent visit to Djakarta.A Foreign Affairs spokesman speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister said that the Australian Government would welcome any decision by the East Timor population to join Indonesia. It opposed independence for East Timor as it would be "unviable" and would "pose a potential threat to the stability of the region." Almost as an afterthought that the final decision would have to be freely made by the people of East Timor.

Almost immediately the propaganda blasts from Indonesia stepped up. Despite a number of clear statements by Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik that Indonesia would strictly observe a policy of non-interference, allow a free decision on self-determination and would not object if that decision was for independence, Radio Kupang, from the capital of Indonesian Timor , daily backed APODETI, and accused FRETILIN of being "communist."

The Indonesian Army newspaper BERITA YUDHA made wild charges of Chinese Communists smuggling arms into Timor and that four Chinese Communist generals had secretly arrived in Dili via Canberra (FEER, Nov. 1) .This ignored the fact that the Chinese minority in Dili is totally pro-Chiang Kai Shek, whose flag flies everywhere...

In Australia, Prime Minister Whitlam's encouragement to Indonesian invasion plans came under strong criticism from both right and left in the polticial spectrum. Liberal Leader Snedden and Liberal Foreign Affairs Shadow Minister Andrew Peacock both strongly attacked this encouragement and demanded the right to self-determination. Similarly, within Labor Caucus discontent was strongly expressed at Whitlam's unilateral decision to hand East Timor over to Indonesia. The Communist Party newspaper Tribune also attacked this attitude as a sell-out.

In a debate in the House of Representatives on October 30 on the Foreign Affairs part of the Appropriations Bill, Peacock, Mr. Morrison (Minister Assisting the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Matters Relating to Papua-New Guinea and Minister for Science) and Chris Hurford (Labor, Adelaide) all spoke on the situation in East Timor.

Mr. Peacock said :"As far as Timor is concerned it is for the Timorese to decide their future. The Labor Government says that the people of Portuguese Timor cannot be self-sufficient. It ought to tell that to the Nauruans, the Tongans, the Samoans or the Papua New Guineans. Evidently Labor does not realise the ramifications of its inconsistencies. So far as Portuguese Timor is concerned we would prefer to see Portugal remain in control and assist with a program for self-determination. It would then be up to the Timorese to determine their own future in a program that they can work out."

Mr. Morrison shortly after replied angrily to Mr. Peacock :"The honourable member for Kooyong also made some outrageous assertions about what he considered to be Australia's position on Portuguese Timor. For the benefit of the honourable member for Kooyong, who is no longer in the chamber, might I indicate the views and the attitude of the Australian government towards Portuguese Timor. Again, they are based on the principles of the United Nations and Australia's support for the right of self-determination for all colonial people -- and this is the attitude that guided us in our policy towards Papua New Guinea. The government does not seek any special position in Portuguese Timor and it believes that the views and the attitudes of the people of Portuguese Timor should be decisive. The Government has indicated that if the people of Portuguese Timor wish to associate themselves in some way with Indonesia Australia would welcome this provided -- and I repeat 'provided' -- that the decision were based on an internationally accepted act of self-determination. In short, the Government believes that the Timorese people should be allowed to proceed deliberately towards a decision about their own future, and in discussions with the Portuguese Minister for Overseas Territories this viewpoint came through. In fact, the Government believes that the attitude that is now being taken by the new Portuguese Government in relation to Portuguese Timor is one that is based on sensitivity for the needs and the ultimate aspirations of the people of Portuguese Timor."

(The speech of Mr. Hurford is reproduced at the end of this booklet).

On the same day (October 30) a report from the Sydney Morning Herald's Djakarta representative, under the headline "Australian warning likely

on threats to Timor. Indonesia may invade --reports."

"Senior Australian officials are expected to warn Indonesia this week that the Labor Government would oppose any military action by Indonesia to 'neutralise' an alleged communist threat in Portuguese Timor or to annexe the colony by force,"the report began.

"This follows suggestions from well-placed sources here that an invasion might be considered if the small island territory --which shares a common border with Indonesia --becomes a 'direct ideological threat' to the republic."

The SMH report says the airing of these views was either a deliberate exercise to gauge Australian reaction or may mean that "an operational contingency plan is being drawn up or already exists."

The permanent head of Australian Foreign Affairs Department ,Mr. Renouf was in Djakarta for talks and was expected to deliver the warning.

There can be little doubt that Whitlam's statements in Djakarta in the first place directly encouraged the hawks in Indonesia's military dictatorship -- particularly General Moertopo "the effective boss of BAKIN"(Financial Review,October 17,1974) the dreaded secret police -- to prepare for invasion.

THE RECENT WARNING DELIVERED BY MR.RENOUF MAY HAVE BEEN TOO LITTLE,TOO LATE.

MANY OBSERVERS , ,INCLUDING MANY IN EAST TIMOR, BELIEVE THAT AN INDONESIAN INVASION IS IMMINENT. One source said the Indonesian generals were saying they wanted to do it as quickly as possible before too much international attention focussed on East Timor.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE IS CRUCIAL TO THE FUTURE OF "PORTUGUESE" TIMOR AND THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF ITS PEOPLE.

WE BELIEVE AN INTERNATIONAL OUTCRY AND PARTICULARLY A STRONG MASS MOVEMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE IS NEEDED TO STOP THE TRAGEDY OF AN INDONESIAN INVASION. ALL SECTORS OF AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL OPINION HAVE NOW COME OUT CLEARLY AND PUBLICLY AGAINST ANY INTERFERENCE WITH EAST TIMOR'S RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION.

WE BELIEVE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT MUST PUBLICLY AND INTERNATIONALLY SERVE A WARNING TO THE INDONESIAN GENERALS : ANY MILITARY INTERVENTION WILL BE RESISTED MILITARILY BY AUSTRALIA AND ALL AID TO INDONESIA WILL BE SUSPENDED UNTIL INDONESIA UNEQUIVOCALLY AND PUBLICLY STATES IT WILL RESPECT EAST TIMOR'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

Only such a firm stand will possibly prevent such a tragedy.For have no doubt: the people of East Timor will resist in every way possible an invasion. There are 3,000 Portuguese troops and 3,000 Timorese troops in East Timor.They would be unable to resist a mass Indonesian invasion,but ,as the Timorese showed the Japanese in World War II , they will resist by guerrilla warfare in the mountain regions (which cover most the island) as long as they are able. The Japanese never conquered East Timor : the Indonesians would find it difficult.In any case , thousands of East Timorese would face massacre as they did from the Japanese,when over 40,000 Timorese died. The choice is OURS: what we do can be decisive.

II. EAST TIMOR : SIX MONTHS OF POLITICAL FREEDOM

On April 25, 1974, the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal overthrew the decades-old fascist regime, freed political prisoners and restored political democracy in Portugal. This was a result of grave discontent in the Portuguese armed forces, made up of conscripts serving three years national service, with the costs of the 13 years of colonial wars in Africa.

"Portuguese" Timor had not known warfare. Isolated from the rest of the world and with all potential forces supporting an independence movement closely under the supervision of the PIDE -- the fascist secret police -- the colony had remained a quiet backwater. Indonesia, which could have provided a base for an independence movement remained hostile to any such development and happily accepted the fascist regime in East Timor.

A small group of Timorese did maintain contact and do what they could to clarify their ideas on Timor's future. To avoid the suspicion of the PIDE, they met in the Prince Henry Park opposite the main administration building in Dili. One of them, Ramos Horta, whose father was a Portuguese democrat deported to Timor in the 1930's and whose mother was Timorese was himself deported to Mozambique for some years.

After the coup, when it became clear the political freedoms in Portugal would extend to Timor, workers in Dili spontaneously went on strike to demand a rise in their miserably low wages of ten escudos (one Aust. dollar equals 34 escudos). They won a rise to 25 escudos a day. Out of this strike, a Committee for the Defence of Labour was formed by Horta and other members of the clandestine group. Out of this emerged the Timorese Social-Democratic Association, which wanted immediate independence de jure with continued close links with Portugal and the development of Timor based on the communal and co-operative traditions of the maubere -- the ordinary villagers.

The TSDA very early in its existence sent a delegation to Indonesia to assure the Indonesians that East Timor wanted to be friendly with Indonesia and would not interfere in that country's internal affairs. The delegation brought back a signed letter from Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik assuring them of Indonesia's respect of non-interference, self-determination and would not be concerned if East Timor chose independence.

Ramos Horta then came to Australia, but was disappointed at lack of interest and lack of support from government sources. By September the TSDA had 1,000 card-carrying members in East Timor.

At a special assembly on September 12, the TSDA decided to change its name and form FRETILIN -- REVOLUTIONARY FRONT FOR INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR. The previous name did not, they felt, express the major aim of their movement -- independence -- and that a front open to all those wanting independence and opposing neo-colonialism would better express the goals of the movement and the East Timorese people.

The incredible response to FRETILIN in the few weeks since showed them correct.

5. East Timor

On September 20, FRETILIN held its first rally. They marched along the harbour foreshores to Prince Henry Park in Dili, stopping on the way at the Indonesian Consulate to present a petition asking Indonesia to respect East Timor's right to self-determination. Australian journalists present estimated that 5,000 persons took part in the march and rally.

FRETILIN grew enormously in the weeks that followed. Daily, hundreds of Timorese flocked to FRETILIN's provisional headquarters at FRETILIN president Fancisco Xavier do Amaral's modest home in a village on the outskirts of Dili.

Xavier is a Timorese of 35 years of age who was formerly an official at Dili's port authority. He is a devout Catholic and by no means measures to Indonesian propaganda of a "Maoist communist" supposedly leading FRETILIN. But Xavier has seen the disastrous effects of Portuguese colonialism and strongly opposes Indonesian takeover, fearing lack of political freedom and Timor being doomed to an economic and neglected backwater in the Republic.

Representatives of FRETILIN visited the towns and villages in the mountains and along the coast. Everywhere they went they received an enthusiastic welcome. In each village or town they visited they recruited members by the hundreds and left behind delegates of FRETILIN charged with organising the members and keeping in contact with FRETILIN central headquarters.

FRETILIN -- THE MAJOR POLITICAL FORCE IN EAST TIMOR

There can be no doubt that FRETILIN is the major political force in East Timor today. .In a short six weeks its membership has now reached 80,000, with nearly 20,000 persons signing up at its Dili headquarters alone. With the exception of a few provincial towns, it is the dominant force throughout the countryside.

FRETILIN produces a fortnightly newspaper in Portuguese. But in a country with 90 percent illiteracy , the radio program it had on the government radio, for an hour each Wednesday night was of crucial importance. In October, however, the government radio control commission banned FRETILIN from use of their radio program, although FRETILIN can still have communiques broadcast over the radio. The control comaission, which is composed of Portuguese officials who still hold the positions hthey held under the fascist regime, banned FRETILIN because they claimed FRETILIN was "communist" and because it was "racist." The last claim arose because in a radio program FRETILIN said, in reply to pro-Portuguese broadcasts, that if East Timor lacked educated cadres and technicians, it was the result of four centuries of colonialism by Portuguese whire men.

FRETILIN has protested this ban, but has been referred to the courts. Of course by the time the courts made a decision the 60 days' ban would be over. FRETILIN supporters in Dili on October 20 staged a spontaneous rally and march when over 2,000 of them gathered in Prince Henry Park once the news of the radio ban spread. They headed for FRETILIN headquarters where leaders asked them to end their protest and wait further developments.

Before dealing in more detail with FRETILIN's program and activity, it is necessary to look at other political formations in East Timor.

6. East Timor

THE U.D.T. --- the party of the elite

Soon after the April 25 coup in Portugal, the UDT was formed. It at first supported General Spinola's concept of federation of colonies with Portugal.

From its beginnings, the UDT has been the party of the elite. Its main core comes from the 500 Portuguese civil servants in East Timor who have good jobs and a comfortable life which they could not hope for in Portugal itself. Many of them are still fascists --and they all held their positions in the former fascist administration without any hint of opposition. Unlike Portugal, April 25 left the old fascist administration virtually untouched in Timor.Only the head of the local PIDE (renamed some years ago DGS) and a few other officials have been sent back to Portugal.

In addition, UDT draws financial and other support from a few Portuguese settlers. The wealthy Portuguese coffee owners fear any independence, as do the two big Portuguese export-import houses. But the Portuguese settlers are only a handful, a few dozen, compared with the hundreds of thousands in Portugal's African colonies. Most of the economy of East Timor is in the hands of the 10,000 strong Chinese minority. Some of these reportedly support UDT financially, although the Chinese community makes apoint of avoiding any direct or open political involvement,presenting a neutral face.

The main base of UDT is among the lower ranks of the public service where part-Timorese and Timorese who have managed to gain some education hold jobs which although by Australian standards lowly paid ,give them objectively a privileged position. They fear that if Portugal goes ,they will lose their jobs and the whole of Timor's economy collapse. They,like all Timorese, have been subjected to decades of fascist-colonial indoctrination and accept,perhaps more willingly than others, the mystique of the flag, of Portugal's "civilising mission",etc..

But not all the Timorese or part-Timorese elite accept this. A growing number identify with FRETILIN and with the ordinary people,from whom they have,they feel, been alienated.

Finally, the UDT bases itself upon the few powerful rais or kings who have been given feudal privileges over centuries by the Portgguese and been the main transmission belt of Portgguese colonial rule.The rais have always collected the poll tax from every adult male over 18 years of age,and have traditionally kept a cut for themselves.They have exacted unpaid labour from villagers as a feudal right.

But the strength and privileges of the rais differ throughout the island. In many places the rais are close to the people,perhaps having a concrete floor in their huts ,rather than a dirt floor. Many rais,particularly at the village level, support FRETILIN. Many of their children,at school in Dili or in Lisbon play a leading role in FRETILIN.

But it remains true that the powerful and privileged rais in regions such

Maubisse, Maubera and the enclave of Uekusi still hold a grip over their people, helped by the Portuguese administrators who still hold the people in the grip of fear and traditional obedience that is unchanged since April 25. In these regions, the UDT, the administration and the poweful rais are identical.

It was for that reason that the administration-UDT arranged for Almeida Santos (Portuguese Minister in charge of decolonisation) to visit only Maubisse (outside of Dili itself) in his recent visit. Maubisse was one of the few regions where the administration and UDT could be assured of an obedient and 100 percent pro-UDT turnout. But Santos ,on his way to Maubisse by road, was stopped by thousands of FRETILIN supporters at Aileu ,the other major town between Maubisse and Dili and a FRETILIN stronghold. The FRETILIN supporters blocked his path and handed him a petition for independence and against hindrance of FRETILIN by the administration.

But things are moving very quickly in East Timor. At the beginning of November , 200 Timorese from Maubisse came of their own volition to Xavier's house, handed in their UDT cards and joined FRETILIN.Villages in the Maubisse region await the visit of FRETILIN representatives.

UDT is a heterogenous formation. It does contain progressive elements who are coming closer to FRETILIN positions. These are to be found among the lower levels of the Timorese elite. Moreover, UDT is without any political perspective. Already it has been forced by events to modify its opposition to immediate independence,party due to the evolution inside Timor, partly because the Portgguese government does not want any lengthy involvement in Timor and the Portuguese troops want to go home, and partly due to the real danger of Indonesian invasion,which would be more "valid" internationally if it could be presented as liberating Timor from Portugal.

The possibility then of a united front around a policy of independence, non-integration in Indonesia, and continuing close and friendly links with Portugal and non-alignment and good neighbourly relations with Indonesia and Australia, is very great between FRETILIN and the UDT.

Moreover, the new governor of Timor who recently arrived from Lisbon is expected to begin the purge of the Portuguese administrators from the fascist period,and thus weaken objectively the most conservative wing of the UDT.

There can be little doubt,however, that if the people of East Timor are allowed to freely express their opinion on their future,and enjoy continuing political democracy without the hindrances of the old-time fascist administration, then FRETILIN will emerge as the party of the vast majority of the Timorese people in a relatively short period.

The real issue is whether the Portuguese will carry out the purge of the administration and whether the Indonesian generals will allow the Timorese people to decide freely their future. The answer to the last question at least rests above all with the Australian people and government.

APODETI -- WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

APODETI is the smallest of the three political parties in East Timor, despite the fact that it gets substantial financial and other aid from Indonesia. The most visible expression of that support are the hundreds of APODETI T-shirts being distributed free. In a poverty-stricken country where a T-shirt can cost a week's wages, this can be little more than low-level bribery. But it is not uncommon to see persons wearing APODETI T-shirts in FRETILIN marches --when you have nothing to put on your back you can be a little opportunist...

APODETI has the ferocious support of Radio Kupang in Indonesian Timor which nightly broadcasts in Tetum (the local lingua-fanca) denouncing UDT as Portuguese colonialists and FRETILIN as "communist." APODETI is not short of funds, and some observers fear that Indonesia may launch a massive bribery campaign among rais to buy their support.

But even APODETI's meagre support is not a dedicated one. For many it is a question of family ties, of friendship and other considerations. One APODETI supporter said: "My card is APODETI but my heart is FRETILIN." It is very doubtful if even the few hundred in APODETI would support an Indonesian invasion. They too relish the political freedom they now enjoy.

But FRETILIN and UDT have not hesitated to label some APODETI leaders as "sellers of the country".

APODETI claims as its legitimacy the abortive 1959 revolt.

In 1959, some Indonesian generals who had sought political asylum in East Timor after the secessionist revolt they had led in Ambon and the South Moluccas had been crushed , planned with Timorese supporters a coup in "Portuguese" Timor. This was discovered by the Portuguese PIDE and some 500 persons killed or imprisoned.

APODETI claims the revolt was aimed at integration of East Timor with Indonesia. The rationale of this is hard to follow as the Indonesian exiles who took part were wanted men in Indonesia and had led earlier an abortive revolt for secession from Indonesia. Although there is no reliable source of information on their motives, it seems more likely they saw an independent East Timor as a launching pad for their ambitions in neighbouring Indonesian islands.

APODETI has only a future as a puppet , some would say quisling, administration for the Indonesian generals. East Timor would be as effectively colonised as it was under Portugal.

APODETI has an hourly radio program, granted at the same time that FRETILIN was banned from Radio Dili. It enjoys full freedom of organisation and progaganda. It will have the right to submit its views to the democratic decision of the people. It is up to Indonesia to accept that decision.

III. 450 YEARS OF COLONIALISM : AN IMPOVERISHED,ENSLAVED NATION

It is difficult to understadn how Dr. Almeida Santos,Portuguese Minister in charge of overseas territories could in his speech in Dili on October 20 could make an outrageously colonialist speech as he did:

"We become emotional and have great feeling,when a Portuguese man leaves Lisbon ,crosses the earth and still finds Portugal,once again,at the other side of the world." He spoke of "the noble feeling of being Portuguese.. what a fatherland and what a people,sirs!"

A small people,the Portuguese, "had been enough to people the world. We went through the unknown; we fought at Ceuta; we sprinkled the coasts of Africa and Asia with factories; we reached China and Japan which with incredible boldness we promoted an ecclestical province of Portugal.Always unsatisfied, always human we have traded, we have Christianised , we have made friends."
He spoke of the "five centuries mandate of our agreement."

While saying that throughout history there had been fascism and other things " so strong was the root implanted in Timor,so noble the idea and so valid the work that the Portuguese presence resisted and sound to everything.... When in remote or recent ages,others wanted ,by act of conquest, to take our place,occupied by right of discovery,occupation and presence, there have been Timorese who sacrificed their lives not to betray their hearts,and Timor went on being Portuguese. And I would say that it will go on being Portuguese on account of its historical tradition,its culture and its feelings,no matter what the organic changes in its political structures may be."

No wonder by this stage FRETILIN supporters in the crowd sent up a chant of "fascist,fascist."

Certainly, Almeida Santos' speech was almost a copybook example of the rhetoric of fascist colonialism that Timorese have heard for centuries. The reality,which strikes a visitor from his or her first moment in Timor is vastly different. Santos must have worn rose-coloured glasses in his few days in East Timor. Or perhaps the fact that his cousin was and still is a high member of the Portuguese administration and a reputed fascist influenced his view.

BAUCAU AIRPORT --A MONUMENT TO PORTUGUESE COLONIALISM

Most overseas visitors come to East Timor through Baucau airport,near the country's second largest town.

They land in a TAA Fokker Friendship on a huge airstrip that can easily handle Jumbo-Jets but sees only the Fokker and the small Doves which ferry travellers to smaller airports and Dili.

The terminal building however is a tin shack. On the other side of the airport is the still uncompleted control building. A wasteful project spending millions of dollars that could be used to much greater benefit elsewhere.

In Baucau itself stand a half-completed market,with its fake Roman columns reaching into the air,with staircases going nowhere. A grandiose project of concrete surrounded by dusty unpaved streets and poverty-stricken huts.

On the road from Baucau to Dili, 120 kms. which takes seven hours in a Bedford truck converted into a bus, you see other monuments of bridges across estuaries,standing gaunt in mid-stream with their approaches swept away by the annual floods. The bus fords the small stream of the "dry" and in the "wet" must stay stranded for days at a time waiting for the river to go down. The roads must be the worst in the world.

Then a few miles from Dili you come across massive roadworks : in places wide enough for a four-lane highway,in others too narrow for two trucks to pass. It seems this is a mjor project,eating up millions of dollars. Unfortunately, the roadwork was poorly surveyed and to avoid landslides,the Portuguese engineers have had to cut deeper and deeper into the hillside to find solid rock. The funds allocated for the work,using modern ,expensive equipment,will soon run out, leaving another monument to fascist inefficiency and corruption.Someone made a nice profit though. The money spent on these few miles could have been used to provide work for Timorese villagers, to repair the roads throughout the whole island...

Portuguese fascism began a new colonial policy in 1969, following the shock that it had to do something in Africa if it was to hold the guerrillas at bay. Some reforms were instituted,and more money spent on projects,usually of a prestige nature. In Africa it failed. In Timor the same policy came into practice.

Since 1939, Portuguese fascism had forbidden Timorese to progress beyond primary school education. There were very few primary schools in the island,before 1969. From 1969 however Portugal promoted primary school education, building a large number of schools (or rather obliging villagers to build them) and built a high school and technical school. In 1971 the first Timorese high school students went to study in Lisbon. Next year the first and only Timorese doctor will return to Timor.

Similarly, in recent years a limited amount of money has been spent supposedly to upgrade the economic infrastructure of the island.Until 1969 it was virtually nil. Since then new port facilities have been built (or should we say the first port facilities),the Baucau airport and a few other projects. But this is a drop in the ocean to Timor's needs.

The economy remains very underdeveloped. Coffee --5,000 tonnes --provides for 92 percent of East Timor's exports. In 1973 exports totalled only $4,633,000 as against imports of $7,207,000.

Coffee --of very high quality and potentially the best in the world -- is grown,40 percent on a single large coffee plantation owned by Portuguese descendants of an early governor who seized it from the Timorese villagers. Another 20 percent is grown by a few medium-sized Portuguese owned plantations and the rest by Timorese peasants.

For the rest, a little copra is exported and minute quantities of other goods.

To keep Timor dependent on Portugal and a source for Portuguese exports, the colonial regime actively discouraged any import-substitution industries. As a result there is a single factory on the island : a soap factory.

Timorese peasants grow tobacco for their own use,but there has been no attempt to develop a tobacco plant. When an Perth company proposed to build a small beer factory on the island,to avoid importing Australian and Mozambican beer, Laurentinia , the Mozambican beer company, managed through judicious bribery in the administration ,to kill the project.

The initiative of the Timorese villagers has been killed by a series of semi-feudal taxes and licences.

For example, there is much good quality lime readily available. Yet the villagers are not allowed to make their own cement : they must get a licence and pay a fee. They cannot make their own furniture.If you want to chop down a tree suitable for furniture making you must purchase a .isence. And so the petty rules of a mercantile imperialism that has changed little since the Seventeenth Century remained in force,crushing any initiative to develop a ny sort of industry.

There is obviously great possibilities to begin small scale import-substitution industries in East Timor,which would substantially cut the import bill.

But the vast majority of the Timorese people,well over 95 percent,live by scratching a living by subsistence agriculture,planting rice and maize and sometimes a few vegetables, following traditional ways and without incentive or the strength,including physical strength,to yet break from inefficient and unproductive traditional agriculture.

Each adult male over 18 years of age must pay 260 escudos in poll tax a year. If he is unable to pay, then he must "work out" the tax in forced labour on the roads or government plantations for two months. 260 escudos may not seem much. But for a subsistence farmer it is a great deal. any are unable to reach the target and so toil on the roads,making it even more difficult to reach the target the following year.

EDUCATION : LEARNING TO LOVE PORTUGAL

As mentioned earlier, the regime began to expand education facilities from 1969. Today there are over 1,000 Timorese students at Dili's high and technical schools. This year there will be over 100 students at tertiary education institutions in Portugal.

But this is a drop in the bucket for the potential of the island. Moreover, the education offered under the colonial regime was one which tried to turn the students into Black,fascist Portuguese. The language,the history, the geography,the culture even the songs and dances taught were Portuguese.

At best Timor received a few lines in a history book about the glories of

Portual's empire...

The main Timorese language,Tetum,which is spoken by all Timorese,as well as the 33 dialects, is banned from the schools.From an early age children must learn Portuguese if they want an education. Timorese dances are forbidden from the schools, as are Timorese songs.

Tetum was not even a written language until a few months ago,when FRETILIN students began to transcribe the language phonetically, and produced the first anti-illiteracy booklet in Tetum.

The ravages of cultural imperialism can be imagined. Still today among older Timorese ,particularly those in public service jobs, you will find those who become indignant when you suggest they sing Timorese songs,rather than faded pops from Portugal or America.

In this ,as in many other fields ,FRETILIN is setting an inspiring example. But more of that later.

HEALTH: WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DIE OF

East Timor has a very high infant mortality rate. TB is epidemic. Malaria is a killer and respiratory disease claims many lives. But many Timorese don't know why their relatives die. No one bothers to really gather statistics about the causes of death.

Undoubtedly a root cause of the high death rate is malnutrition. Timor is a rich and fertile land, capable of providing its people with a good diet. People do not die of starvation in East Timor, but rather from a totally insufficient and poor diet, usually of a rice and maze gruel,perhaps if they live near the coast with a few dried sardines laborously caught by net. It is both a question of upgrading the general level of agriculture and bringing new land under cultivation, and of education in a proper diet,from foods already available --something that cannot be done without a total political and cultural restructuring at the village level.

In such a situation where the real preventive medicine of improved diet etc.is non existence, the curative health facilities are totally inadequate for the task. True,since 1969, a number of small health clinics have been built in the villagers.But they can only help a few,particularly those with some education and understanding of diet needs.

FRETILIN is planning next year to launch--- under the leadership of Timor's first local doctor -- a people's health scheme at the village level, combining preventive and curative medical treatment.

IV. CO-OPERATIVES : THE WAY FORWARD

FRETILIN, drawing from the co-operative traditions still strong in most areas in East Timor ,and on the writings of Amilcar Cabral,the murdered Guinea-Bissau leader and on the Tanzanian experiment in co-operatives, places its hopes for a prosperous future for the people on the development of co-operatives,democratically organised at the village,even family level.

Co-operatives are part of the village tradition,dating back to pre-colonial times when villages organised cooperatively,electing their chiefs ,who acted as arbiter and main organiser for co-operative farming.

Today the traditions linger. Portuguese colonialism even sought to turn these traditions to their own benefit,a few decades ago organising "communes" in which the villagers were encouraged to work cooperatively to build churches,sometimes schools and above all keep the roads in shape. The benefit went to colonialism and the "communes" beame often a form of forced,unpaid labour.

FRETILIN in the short few weeks of its existence have already launched three co-operatives in Timor : at Bazartete ,Bucoli and Aileu.

At Bazartete, the vice-president of FRETILIN Nicola Lobato ,has organised a pilot project with 50 persons from one village participating. They have begun already to build roads linking their village to other main roads,to make transport easier,and begun to clear land in the rich river valley which has remained unfarmed for centuries. At harvest time early next year they will combine togecher all the surplus produce grown above their annual personal needs ,and sell it in Dili.

In Bucoli, a similar plan will begin at the end of the harvest,the surplus being sold collectively.

That way the villagers will get higher prices,and with the escudos gained, buy wholesale the basic goods they cannot supply themselves.In other places,they will barter with other villagers.

FRETILIN hopes they will spread the cooperatives to most parts of the island by the time of the harvest. The surplus crops would then be sold centrally in Dili and wholesale purchases of goods distributed. The villagers themselves will make the deicsion of the use of their income --how much may be allocated for example to purchase of a truck,to buying small tractors, building a store,etc..

Clearly such a basic cooperative scheme poses the need to break the monopoly of the export-import trade by the ten companies now dominating it (two Portuguese,eight Chinese). Within a year FRETILIN hopes to establish a co-operative import-export firm that could compete with the monopolies.

One difficulty is that the Portuguese administration assures the traders and import-export companies with a cost plus basis of profit.

The price of coffee purchased by the Chinese middle men is set by the regime. It is raised an lowered according to the world market price, but always assuring the middlemen and the exporters a profit The same applies to imports : a profit margin of between 10 and 14 percent is added to cost for the importer and a further 16 to 20 percent for the retailer.

But how much these regulations are observed is another thing.The administration is notoriously corrupt and the big firms can do what they will.It is at most the village shopkeeper who feels the pinch a little.

If the cooperatives are to be really a success, they must not only tap the energy and enthusiasm of the people, but also have available the aid of overseas nations and a state which is pledged to their development above all else, eschewing wasteful prestige projects or a concentration on urban development.

Only on the basis of a flourish cooperative agriculture and a culturally liberated people can any really sound economic development take place including in the economic and industrial sphere.

It is for that reason that FRETILIN in the three pilot cooperatives already begun, combine political and general education with the cooperatives. Using the Paulo Friere method, they have begun an anti-illiteracy campaign, in Tetum, beginning first with a booklet which takes the student (often adults) from a simple identification of animals and learning to form letters, to a course in the nature of colonialism and the way forward through independence.

It is for that reason too that FRETILIN has begun to develop Timorese culture and song-writers and musicians put to music the aspirations of the people in songs such as FOR RAMALEU (Mount Ramaleu) which has become FRETILIN's anthem and is heard everywhere.

The Timorese people are living through exciting and inspiring times. The question is whether that will be cut short by an Indonesian invasion, and the subsequent bloodbath and war.

V PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS : WE WANT TO GO HOME

At a conservative estimate, 85 % ... of the 3,000 Portuguese conscripts stationed in Timor simply want to go home. They support Timorese independence, if only for that reason, although a sizable minority support it for more conscious, anti-colonialist reasons.

Until October 26, the Portuguese troops in Timor were largely unorganised. Unlike their brothers in Africa, they had fought no war, dying if only of boredom. There political awareness was therefore at a lower level.

On October 20, however, discontent among the soldiers reached a peak and spontaneously 300 went to the airport on the arrival of Almeida Santos and presented him with a petition demanding higher wages (a private got 500 escudos a month), speedy return to Portug , dismissal of former fascists from the administration and in particular the radio control commission which had just banned FRETILIN from the air for 60 days.

"We got nothing from Santos", was a common complaint from Portuguese soldiers I spoke to.

However, on October 26, 600 commandos, veterans of Portugal's African wars were flown out from Portugal. On arrival they painted hammer and sickles on monuments and the words: "We want to go home."

They served notice they were there to clean the fascists out of the administration, protect FRETILIN and prepare for independence, then go home.

But the very militancy of the commandos worried FRETILIN : they feared it would feed Indonesian fears and be used to justify Indonesian invasion.

"We are not communist," FRETILIN leaders stressed."We only want independence to quietly improve the lot of our people .We do not want to threaten anyone,but simply live in peace."

Nevertheless, the passive or even active support of the Portuguese troops is important for FRETILIN,for it prevents the fascists in the administration crushing the movement and they do provide some detterent to the Indonesians.

FRETILIN also has the support of the vast majority of the 3,000 Timorese soldiers in the Portuguese army,including the NCOs. All Timorese males must serve three years in the army. As a result,all Timorese men have some basic military training.

The small Timorese police force also largely supports FRETILIN.

VI. BY WAY OF CONCULSION

Many young Australians have been in East Timor, as they start their island-hopping through Indonesia ,to Singapore then overland to Europe. They can doss in the open air or in a tin shed at "The Beach House" for nothing. The only danger of theft is from their fellow Australians.

The people of East Timor like Australians,rightly or wrongly.They still speak of the Second World War,when they fought with Australian commandos against the Japanese,alongside a few anti-fascist Portuguese deportees who refused to flee the island with the fascist Portuguese.

They also appreciate the friendly,down-to-earth attitude of many young Australians who treat them as equals (though this is not true of all,). They expect Australia to help them in their desire for independence.They figure:"we helped you in the world war,now you should help us."

The Timorese are a friendly,human people.Despite their poverty crime is almost unknown. Those in prison are either draft dodgers or were unable to pay their tax.

FRETILIN speaks of tourist development of the island,but not with the garish,multi-storeyed hotels of Hawaii ,Fiji or Surfer's Paradise which degrade the people to servants, raise local prices through competition for local goods and food, and enrich only the hotel developers and a local elite. Rather they see small-scale hotels, for tourists who want to mix with the people, not transport a little bit of Australia to Timor.

With Darwin a short flight away ($80 return!) such development has possibilities

But East Timor is also tempting to the big developers,and already a joint Australian-Chinese consortium is building a 100-room luxury hotel and cabaret project ,"Hotel Timor",while others are considering a major project involving 670 rooms in five luxury hotels. That is "development" Timor can well do without.

But it is not only the hotel developers in Australia who have their eyes on East Timor.

BHP LOOKS FOR MINERAL WEALTH

BHP has had two geologists working for two years in the mountains of East Timor searching for minerals. The geologists and BHP are tight-lipped about what they have found. But reliable Timorese sources say they have found quite a deal. All signs points to Timor being a rich country.

And while BHP is searching for minerals, Timor Oil and now Woodside-Burmah have been searching for oil. Again, they have been tight lipped, but it appears they have made one sizeable find at least. The Timor Sea is known to be rich in oil and in the flight over from Darwin you pass over derricks offshore.

Only a few people really know how rich Timor is. But some have said it is very rich. The question is : who will benefit from that wealth ?

All these factors add complications to the East Timor question.

But the principle now held by all Australian political parties, that the people of East Timor must have the right to self-determination , can alone be a guide for any political action.

In conclusion, it is only possible to repeat what was written earlier in this booklet: the Australian people must be aroused to the danger of a military adventure by Indonesia in invading East Timor. The Australian Government must make very clear to the Indonesian generals that any invasion will be resisted militarily by Australia and that all economic and military aid from Australia to Indonesia will be cut off until the threat of invasion is ended and the right of self-determination to the people of East Timor guaranteed.

In addition, Australians have a responsibility to aid the people of East Timor overcome the centuries of colonialism. FRETILIN is asking for immediate aid, listed below. They believe that an independent East Timor run in the interest of the people, not foreign investors or a local elite and with aid from the world , can quickly overcome that heritage.

The question of mobilising public opinion against an Indonesian invasion is urgent, a question that must be resolved within a few months. But the need to aid East Timor is a long-term responsibility on the Australian people and government.

-- Sydney, November 9, 1974.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA LIBERATION CENTRE, SYDNEY, WHO SPENT TWO WEEKS IN EAST TIMOR IN OCTOBER. A committee to support East Timor independence and oppose intervention is being formed. It may be contacted through SALC, first floor, 232 Castlereagh St., Sydney, NSW-2000. Australia. (phone: 26-3049)